

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 191

By Johnson C

A RESOLUTION to designate August 12, 2011, as “John T. Cunningham Day” in the State of Tennessee.

WHEREAS, the wonderful history of the State of Tennessee is founded upon the personal stories of those distinguished individuals who chose to dedicate themselves to a lifetime of public service and enhance the quality of life of their fellow citizens and their communities; and

WHEREAS, one such exemplary individual was John Talley Cunningham, Jr., of Montgomery County, who served with distinction as the Speaker of the Tennessee House of Representatives for the 55th General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, born in Dickson County on August 12, 1877, John T. Cunningham, Jr., the son of John Talley and Minah Weems Cunningham, relocated with his parents to Montgomery County at the age of four. He grew up on the family farm located on Highway 41-W; and

WHEREAS, after attending elementary and high schools in Clarksville, Mr. Cunningham earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from Southwestern Presbyterian University in Clarksville and, in 1899, received his Bachelor of Laws (L.L.B.) degree from Vanderbilt University Law School, where he served as a member of Delta Tau Delta Fraternity; and

WHEREAS, upon his graduation, Mr. Cunningham returned to Clarksville and founded his legal practice. He soon earned the respect and admiration of his clients and legal colleagues for the exemplary quality of his work; and

WHEREAS, recognized as a leader in his community by the residents of Montgomery County, John Cunningham offered himself for public service in 1905 and won election to the Tennessee House of Representatives for the 54th General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, winning re-election in 1907, Mr. Cunningham also won the confidence and support of his peers in the Tennessee House of Representatives, who elected him to stand as Speaker of the House for the 55th General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, 1907 would prove to be a banner year for Speaker Cunningham as he was joined in blessed matrimony on November 21st with Sarah White, daughter of James S. and Chloe Tulitha (Eddins) White of Clarksville; and

WHEREAS, this joyous union would produce four children: Chloe Cunningham Quin Northington, John Talley Cunningham III, Sarah White Cunningham Brothers, and James C. Cunningham, who served as a Representative in the 72nd, 73rd, and 75th General Assemblies; and

WHEREAS, leaving legislative service in 1909, Mr. Cunningham continued his legal practice and engaged in farming near Clarksville until 1918, when he once again offered himself for public service and subsequently won election to the office of county and criminal court judge for Montgomery County; and

WHEREAS, over the next twenty-seven years, Judge Cunningham would serve as the chief magistrate for his community, evincing the greatest integrity and an immense store of common sense as he filled a dual-capacity job that also required him to oversee the management and operation of the growing county; and

WHEREAS, he soon delivered on his campaign promise to connect the community through the construction of a much-needed free bridge over the Cumberland River, and he would continue to build a better Montgomery County through his support of new roads, bridges, and fiscal responsibility; and

WHEREAS, Judge Cunningham promoted and encouraged the development of new schools in Montgomery County and provided exemplary service as Chairman of the Montgomery County Board of Education; and

WHEREAS, a successful farmer, Judge Cunningham was a founder of the Eastern Dark-Fired Tobacco Growers Association and served as its president from its inception until his death in 1945; and

WHEREAS, a member of the Board of Stewards of Madison-Street Methodist Church, Judge Cunningham was also a member of numerous civic, community, and charitable organizations, including the Blue Wing Hunting Club, Kiwanis Club International, the Free and Accepted Masons, the Order of the Mystic Shrine, and the Independent Order of Odd Fellows; and

WHEREAS, the likes of gentlemen such as John Cunningham, Jr., seldom walk among us and as Sir Christopher Wren wrote: "If you would see his monument, look around you" for the lifework of this esteemed Tennessean laid the foundation for the growth and prosperity of Montgomery County and its residents; and

WHEREAS, it is highly appropriate that this body pay special tribute to the memory of such a distinguished and honorable Tennessean and his lifetime of achievement; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that this Body hereby designates August 12, 2011, as "John T. Cunningham Day" in the State of Tennessee to honor his memory and pay tribute to his distinguished life of public service.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.